In Smithsonian Race Guidelines, Rational Thinking and Hard Work Are White Values

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The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture recently unveiled guidelines for talking about race. A graphic displayed in the guidelines, entitled "Aspects and Assumptions of Whiteness in the United States," declares that rational thinking and hard work, among others, are white values.

In the section, Smithsonian declares that "objective, rational, linear thinking," "quantitative emphasis," "hard work before play," and various other values are aspects and assumptions of whiteness.

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture had no comment for *Newsweek*. They referred to the website's page titled "Whiteness" when asked for additional comment. The graphic was later removed from the page.

"White dominant culture, or whiteness, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes, and ways of life have been normalized over tiem and are now considered standard practices in the United States," the introduction to the section reads. "And since white people still hold most of the institutuional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture— including people of color."

Another section says that white values include "steak and potatoes: 'bland is best'" and that white people have "no tolerance for deviation from a single god concept."

Other subsections deal with "family structure," "rugged individualism," "Protestant work ethic" and "aesthetics."

TALKING ABOUT RACE | NMAAHC

ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITENESS & WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

White dominant culture, or ***whiteness***, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture — including people of color.

Rugged Individualism

- The individual is the primary unit • Self-reliance
- Independence & autonomy highly valued + rewarded
- Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, *"You get what you deserve"*

Family Structure

- The nuclear family: father, mother, 2.3 children is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent

Emphasis on Scientific Method

- Objective, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative emphasis

History

- Based on Northern European immigrants' experience in the United States
- Heavy focus on the British Empire
- The primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition

Protestant Work Ethic

- Hard work is the key to success
- Work before play
- "If you didn't meet your goals, you didn't work hard enough"

Religion

- Christianity is the norm
- Anything other than Judeo – Christian tradition is foreign
- No tolerance for deviation from single god concept

Status, Power & Authority

- Wealth = worth
- Your job is who you are
- Respect authority
- Heavy value on ownership of goods, space, property

Future Orientation

- Plan for future
- Delayed gratification
- Progress is always best
- "Tomorrow will be better"

Time

- Follow rigid time schedules
- Time viewed as a commodity

Aesthetics

- Based on European culture • Steak and potatoes; "bland is best"
- Woman's beauty based on blonde, thin – "Barbie"
- Man's attractiveness based on economic status, power, intellect

Holidays

- Based on Christian religions
- Based on white history & male leaders

Smithsonian's Aspects and Assumptions of Whiteness and White Culture page declares that hard work and rational thinking are white values. | Smithsonian/Smithsonian

The "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" section says that white people do not need to worry about certain things, such as doing things alone without being followed or harassed, along with feeling that their race is properly represented.

"Thinking about race is very different for nonwhite persons living in America," the Smithsonian site continues. "People of color must always consider their racial identity, whatever the situation, due to the systemic and interpersonal racism that still exists."

On July 15, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture clarified their portal's intentions and how readers should approach the information. "At a time when the soul of our country is being tested, our Talking About Race portal will help individuals and communities foster constructive conversations and much needed dialogue about one of our nation's most challenging topics: Racism and its corrosive impact," the museum began a Twitter thread.

"America is once again facing the challenge of race, a challenge that needs all of our understanding and commitment," it continued. "Our portal was designed to help individuals, families, and communities talk about racism, racial identity and how forces shape every aspect of our society."

"As an institution devoted to learning and education, we welcome those discussions while also encouraging the public to take a holistic approach and read the information in the full context," the thread concluded, pointing followers to the site's page about Talking About Race.